



# FEMA

## NEWS RELEASE STATE/FEDERAL DISASTER FIELD OFFICE JOINT INFORMATION CENTER



Contact: Penelope Cassidy, WEMD (425) 290-4129  
Diana Seifert, FEMA (425) 290-4132  
Richard Jenkins, SBA (916) 566-7240

November 24, 2003  
DR1499: PR020

### **Be Careful When Entering Your Flood Damaged Home**

**Everett, WA**—Flood season has arrived with a vengeance and State and Federal emergency officials urge people returning to their water damaged homes to be very careful. Damage to the integrity of a building may not be obvious from the outside.

In order to stay safe it is suggested that residents wear sturdy shoes, long pants, and gloves, and carry battery-operated flashlights or lanterns to examine interior damage. Do not use matches or other open flames because gas may be trapped inside.

Before entering a building, inspect it. Be on the lookout for structural problems. Walls, floors, doors, windows, and foundations may have been weakened and damaged by floodwaters. Check for loose plaster, weakened floors, and ceilings that could fall.

Make sure electricity is turned off and call your utility company. Just because breakers are tripped, it doesn't mean that electric current isn't still coming to the building. Keep the power off until the electrical system is inspected. If you see sparks or broken and frayed wires, or if you smell hot insulation, call an electrician. Unplug appliances and lamps, remove light bulbs and remove the cover plates of wall switches and outlets that got wet.

Take photographs of damage to both the building and its contents for insurance claims. If possible, take pictures that show the high-water marks left on walls as well as other damage.

Watch out for animals, especially snakes and rodents that may have found their way into your property. Use a stick to poke any debris.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Washington Emergency Management Division encourage all Washington residents to take every precaution to be safe this winter.

On March 1, 2003, FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. FEMA's continuing mission within the new department is to lead the effort to prepare the nation for all hazards and effectively manage federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates proactive mitigation activities, trains first responders, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration.

###

**Note to Editors:** Disaster information is available on FEMA's World Wide Web at <http://www.fema.gov> or the Washington Emergency Management Division at <http://emd.wa.gov>